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AN
H O U R
BEFORE
MARRIAGE;
A
F A R C E
OF TWO ACTS.

As it was ATTEMPTED to be acted
AT THE
THEATRE ROYAL, in COVENT GARDEN.

L O N D O N:
Printed for W. JOHNSTON in Ludgate-street.
MDCCLXXII.

H. O. U. A.

RECORD

M. A. T. I. C. E.

B. A. R. C. I.

W. O. A. T. E.

AT THE

AT THE

LONDON

PRINTED BY

ADAMSON

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE history of this Farce is as follows: the Author, a gentleman of Dublin, intimately acquainted with Mr. Colman, transmitted it to his friend for representation on the stage of Covent-Garden. The performance was accordingly attempted, and the copy disposed of to a bookseller; but the public having given it a most unfavourable reception, it was withdrawn from the press as well as the stage, till the receipt of a letter, an extract of which (that does honour to the writer) is here subjoined, as the best apology for the present publication. The Author will at least appear to have the merit of receiving his sentence with a good grace and a manly spirit; nor will he be thought to arraign the decision of the public, while he leaves it to the reader to determine for himself, whether he has not been too fastidious a spectator.

Some have ascribed these scenes to Mr. Colman; and if any of those persons meant to gratify their spleen by reputing him the writer of an unsuccessful piece, they may now indulge their feelings still farther, by supposing him capable of inscribing that piece in the most flattering terms to himself, thereby exhibiting to the world, in one instance, a complication of fear, vanity, and imposture.

But he, *convinc'd that all but Truth must die,
Leaves to its own mortality the Lie.*

(E X T R A C T.)

Dublin, Feb. 6, 1772.

FOUR or five English mails having been delayed by contrary winds, so as to come in all together, have occasioned me to receive my dear Mr. Colman's letter of the 28th, only this day.—I find by it that I have been unfortunate, but indeed I cannot say I am much ashamed of being so. So considerable a share of the piece was *Moliere's*, that, without any vanity, I may be allowed to think it could not deserve, nor would it have received so very violent a treatment, if the audience had been totally dispassionate.

That an unexperienced Author should have been unsuccessful in a first attempt of this kind, in such difficult or rather unaccountable times as the present, is by no means extraordinary: my defeat, therefore, has not greatly moved me; but that you, my dear kind Sir, should have suffered so much anxiety on my account—that the business of your theatre should have met with such a baulk—that such excellent actors should, through my means, have sustained marks of disapprobation from the public—all this indeed distresses me to a very great degree. Your extraordinary friendliness in having made this Farce so very strong I shall never forget; your taking the trouble of introducing it by a prologue of your own writing; all your care and solicitude of every kind for this poor unfortunate Bantling, account very naturally for the supposition you tell me of, that it was your own. Those who could pay you so bad a compliment as to think you the author of a faulty unsuccessful piece, had certainly, from every consideration but its intrinsic weakness,

weakness, reason sufficient to form such a judgment; for had it been your own you could not possibly in any respect have been kinder to it. For such obligations all thanks are poor: I shall, therefore, offer none, but only assure you most solemnly and truly, that through my whole life the sense of them shall never leave my mind.

I am exceedingly uneasy at this report, I have just been mentioning, of your being yourself the writer of the Farce in question: if you should find this idea to keep possession of the minds of any considerable number of people, I beg you will take the natural and proper means to undeceive them, by disclosing the real Author's name, and showing my own copy to all your acquaintance.—I am much of your mind that while you were employed in amputating *An Hour before Marriage*, you were too tender; if you had pruned it more closely, its fate might not have been so severe: I would, therefore, my dear Sir, if any thing of mine should hereafter appear worth your meddling with at all, wish you to treat it with more freedom—to retrench, add, or alter in every shape with entire confidence, and never suppose it possible that I can fail of approving what you have done.

Since your letter of the 14th last month, I have wrote to you twice: the former of my letters I inclosed to a friend, who I suppose sent it safe; the latter went by post directly to yourself, and was dated the 29th.—In this last, I sent you, in sanguine expectation of my Farce succeeding, some lines, by which I inscribed it to you; but it is highly probable you will not chuse that your name should appear before an unsuccessful piece: in this respect pray use your own discretion. As to Johnston, no doubt, it would be both absurd and unfair to think of tying him to an agreement which had been entered into with hopes that were afterwards frus-

trated: however, as even *damnation* raises some curiosity, I suppose he has thought it worth while to publish the thing. All this little matter I am well convinced you have managed much better than I could have done, were I upon the spot: When will I cease to trouble you?

As I know your health has been for some time past in a very delicate state, I am fearful this check, and the disappointment your friendship made you feel for me, have affected it: for God's sake, my dear Sir, don't entertain a thought of me that may make you an instant uneasy: I have entirely settled my mind about the matter: and my not being on the spot has made it strike me much less disagreeably than it might otherwise have done. I can with truth assure you, that all my vexation is on your account. Pray make all the excuses you can think of for me to the performers, and assure them I would not for any consideration have wished so unpleasant a thing to have happened to them, if I could possibly have foreseen the event of that unfortunate Saturday.

AS

A CHEARFUL (THO' TRIFLING) TRIBUTE
OF RESPECT
TO ELEGANT TALENTS;

AS

A SINCERE MARK
OF ESTEEM
FOR EXCELLENT QUALITIES;

AND AS

AN AFFECTIONATE PLEDGE
OF FRIENDSHIP
FOR A PERFECTLY AMIABLE CHARACTER;

THIS PIECE
IS INSCRIBED TO

GEORGE COLMAN, ESQ;

BY

HIS MOST OBLIGED,

THE AUTHOR.

MOLIERE's *Marriage Forcé* has furnished not only the general design of this piece, but the substance of two or three entire scenes. As much of that excellent original has been preserved, as the adapting of the subject to English manners would permit; and little more has been added than was necessary to the construction of a Fable, that of the French production being so naked as hardly to deserve the name.

The situations in this petite-piece of Moliere appeared humorous and theatrical; which (joined to the equally material circumstance of its having never yet having been brought on our stage) was the motive of the present attempt.

THE AUTHOR.

P R O.

PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. WOODWARD in the Character
of HARLEQUIN.

Written by Mr. COLMAN.

BEHOLD, ye Critics of this classic age,
The only relic of the ancient Stage!

In Greece no player try'd the arduous task,
Of acting Love, Grief, Rage,—without a mask;
On Vizors fram'd of canvas, brass, and wood,
Humours and Passions ready-painted stood;
Actors, from Nature borrowing no grace,
By Rouge, like modern Ladies, form'd the face.
Lais without a tooth could charm the beaux,
Ammon might squint, and Venus want a nose.

Poor Harlequin, tho' mask'd, like these once spoke,
And France and Italy admir'd each joke:
But round-head England,—all things who curtails,
Who cuts off Monarchs beads and horses tails—
By Malice led, by Rage and Envy stung,
Put in my mouth a gag, and ty'd my tongue.
Yet I'll remonstrate—I'll unfold my case—
Yes, I will speak—nay more, I'll shew my face.

(Pushes up his mask.

Hark, a pursuit!—the Critics in full cry!
No Minister is half so maul'd as I:
Nay, plaster'd on posts, tho' they often announce me,
Even Managers doubt if they shou'd not renounce me.
Yet 'tis I give a zest to their comedy scenes,
I hold up the tail of their tragedy queens:
Without my caprioles, whims, and frolics to tempt ye,
Pit and boxes are thin, and the galleries empty!

Then, Sirs, let me claim—and claim by old right,
The rear of each play, the fag-end of each night!

What!

PROLOGUE.

*What! discard me for farces on folly and vice,
Compos'd by themselves—and retail'd at half price!
Our Poet to-night—Arrah, Joys, a dear Honey!
Comes from Ireland to pocket your sweet British money:
Nay, brings in a Scotsman—because 'tis the fashion
To feast at th' expence of a neighbouring nation.
But since after Plays there shou'd come Pantomime,
Or Opera shou'd squall—a plain Farce is a crime:
So, however, with plot, wit, and humour he cram it,
I, Harlequin, humbly beseech you to damn it.*



PERSONS REPRESENTED.

<i>Stanley,</i>	Mr. YATES.
<i>Sir Andrew Melville,</i>	Mr. SHUTER.
<i>Tardy,</i>	Mr. WOODWARD.
<i>Elwood,</i>	Mr. WROUGHTON.
<i>Miss Melville,</i>	Mrs. MATTOCKS.
<i>A Servant.</i>	

SCENE, London.

Time, the same with that of the representation.

A N

A N
H O U R
B E F O R E
M A R R I A G E.

A C T I.

S C E N E. The Park.

STANLEY and ELWOOD meeting.

Stanley.

ELWOOD, my old acquaintance!—Elwood in England!

Elw. My good friend, how do you?—After a long absence from home, what pleasure is there even in seeing a face that one has known; but how much more in meeting again those whom one loves and esteems.

Stan. I am rejoiced to see you safe return'd, and in such good health and spirits—But I hardly look'd for you so soon:—I protest I thought you still in the East Indies.

Elw. And there I should have been still, but that my wishes were moderate, and my fondness for my native country much more prevalent than my ambition.—Dear England!—May I perish, Stanley, if I wou'dn't rather enjoy a mere competency here, than a principality on the banks of the Ganges.

B

Stan,

2 *An HOUR before MARRIAGE,*

Stan. Happy would it be for many there and here too, if your way of thinking was a little more general. I hope, however, you have brought home something not very inconsiderable from this country overflowing with diamonds and ingots.—Eh, George?

Elw. About five and twenty thousand pounds—If I had left my honour and my heart behind me here, I might with ease, in my seven years absence, have made twice as much.—Now I have told this to no one but you, Mr. Stanley; and you must be so kind as not to mention it.

Stan. Not mention your having brought home this sum of money!—And pray why keep the matter a secret, George?

Elw. My reason's a whimsical one; I'll explain it to you in as few words as I can—For some time before I left England, I had contracted a strong attachment to a young creature of about seventeen, but whose sense and accomplishments were infinitely beyond her years.

Stan. Oh! infinitely to be sure!—Well!

Elw. This sweet girl, I had reason to imagine, returned my affection; so I made proposals for her to her mother; but they were rejected on account of my having hardly any fortune, and the daughter on her side but a very trifling one—What do you suppose I did on this occasion?

Stan. Ran away with her, to be sure.

Elw. Ran away by myself, and left her behind me.—By a little interest I obtained an employment in the East Indies; and without taking leave (for that might have overthrown all my resolution) set sail.

Stan. Without taking leave!

Elw. Without taking leave any other ways than by a letter, the contents of which were to this purpose: “That I was going to endeavour to procure
“ what

" what (if she still continued favourably inclined to me) might remove all objections to our union; that however, as I wished for no other security than her affections, I could not think of putting the slightest constraint upon her, and whatever manner she might act in, I should never think I had a right to complain."

Stan. Well; and what has happened since, pray?

Elw. I have heard from her frequently; but when I wrote, never acquainted her with my success.—When I have learned whether she is in town or in the country, I shall inform her of my arrival, and tell her I am come home penniless—If she accepts me on those terms I am sure of gaining a deserving heart; if otherwise, I escape an union with an unworthy one—But if I can answer for any thing, I can for her behaviour; for I would doubt my existence almost as soon as I would her affection.

Stan. I understand what you'd be at: your thoughts are all turned upon wedlock, and now you want to have my opinion whether you ought to marry this young lady or not?

Elw. No such thing, upon my honour—I know very well what I have to do.

Stan. No such thing!—that's very extraordinary—What you have been mentioning, puts me in mind, however, of a business which I should be glad to impart to you. You are a young man, Elwood; yet you have some experience and very good sense: now there is a certain affair in which I have need of your advice.

Elw. Of my advice, Sir!

Stan. Yes, of your advice—A thing too of the utmost consequence it is.—Stay—Isn't that Tardy the lawyer?—Mr. Tardy!—Mr. Tardy!—

4 *An HOUR before MARRIAGE,*

Enter Tardy.

Tar. Mr. Stanley, your servant—What now, Mr. Stanley?—

Stan. Are the writings finished at last, Mr. Tardy?

Tar. In truth, I apprehend not—Your are in such a hurry, Mr. Stanley!

Stan. Hurry! I have been waiting your time and dancing attendance—and these are such kind of things, you know, as require speed.

Tar. Speed is the bane of all business, Mr. Stanley—The law knows of no such term. But you shall be satisfied:—Come along with me:—there are, I think, but a few blanks to be filled up in your parchments—You may see them yourself.

Stan. I attend you—Elwood, you'll give me leave for an instant—I'll return to you immediately. [*Exit Stanley and Tardy.*]

Elw. It's granted—If I could but see my dear Fanny now—Let me consider—How shall I find out whether she is in town or country?—To enquire from Mrs. Williams her friend and mine!—Ay—Odso—Sir Andrew Melville, my Fanny's brother here!—Then it's more than probable she's in London too—I see he recollects me—Now for a trial of the friendship he so warmly profess'd for me.

Enter Sir Andrew Melville.

Sir A. Gud troth it is he!—It is Elwood himself. (*Comes up and shakes Elwood by the hand.*) Well, my dear fellow, how do you?—how long return'd?—abounding, swimming in riches? Eh!

Elw. Your questions come rather quick upon one another: I can't answer 'em all in a breath, But I thank you heartily for the satisfaction you express at my safe return; it would be treason to friendship

friendship to entertain the slightest doubt of your sincerity.

Sir A. Of my sincerity, George!—doubt of my sincerity!—Had you landed here as naked and unsophisticated as the tatter'd madman in King Lear, or as Robinson Crusoe on his island, my reception of you would not be a whit the less warm or cordial. Not a whit I assure you. (*Shaking Elwood by the hand.*)

Elw. I am thoroughly convinced of it—We are old acquaintance; very old acquaintance, Sir Andrew.

Sir A. Acquaintance!—Friends!—friends, Elwood!—The long established friendship, the early and close intimacy that has subsisted between us from our very childhood, can leave you no room to doubt—

Elw. The reality of what you profess?—No, certainly.

Sir A. No, surely—Does the man deserve to live, Elwood, who will desert his friend on that very account, which should attach him the more strongly to him—because he is in want of his assistance?

Elw. It is but too common a character.

Sir A. The villain who could be capable of such baseness, merits what is worse than death—everlasting contempt and infamy—But let's change the subject for a more pleasing one—I din'd the other day with Spelman, our old school-fellow, who went to the East Indies a little before you, and is just return'd.—He has made a noble hand of it; brought over to the tune of thirty thousand pounds, and there's near as much to follow him—We'll see him cut a figure;—Spelman will blaze:—a red ribbon is the least thing he can look to, and that soon—Sixty thousand!—A pretty round sum!—

Has

6 *An HOUR before MARRIAGE,*

Has the Pactolian tide flowed in as plentifully upon you, George?

Elw. Not quite.

Sir A. Not quite!—Oh! well, nearly I hope—Fifty thousand, perhaps.

Elw. You are above the mark.

Sir A. Oh! Forty then?

Elw. (*Shakes his head.*)

Sir A. Thirty?

Elw. (*Shakes his head again.*)

Sir A. Twenty?

Elw. (*Still shakes his head.*)

Sir A. What the devil!—Five?—Two?—One?

Elw. (*Still shakes his head.*)

Sir A. What? and have you not brought home then even one poor single solitary thousand with you, Mr. Elwood?

Elw. No, Sir Andrew.—Would you have the history of my voyage?—I went away from hence little better than nothing, and am returned hither somewhat worse than nothing.—That is the full and true account of my peregrination—Compendious you see.

Sir A. Compendious do you call it?—Yes, damn it, compendious indeed:—compendious with a witness!—Why, Mr. Elwood! this is extraordinary, very extraordinary, I protest:—and I am heartily sorry you have had no better success.—I pity your case most sincerely, I assure you, Mr. Elwood.

Elw. My case is unfortunate, but I have a good heart still, however—I am not destitute of friends—Some very sincere friends I have, among whom you stand foremost, Sir Andrew. And does the man deserve to live who will desert his friend, because he is in want of his assistance?

Sir

Sir A. Deserve to live!—Oh, you are too hard, Mr. Elwood. A man who should act so, would be wrong to be sure.

Elw. Wrong!—You speak of it in too slight terms—The villain who could be capable of such baseness, merits what is worse than death—everlasting contempt and infamy.

Sir A. Pooh, pooh!—you are too warm—too warm indeed—You don't consider that a person may have the best inclinations in the world, and not the power. Now for instance—I got a thing the other day for one of my tenant's sons who served me in my last election, and might disserve me in my next. I obtained since that another small matter for my footman—a fellow who had very convenient talents.—And after such recent obligations, you must be sensible, Mr. Elwood, that I can't have the face to ask any further favours at present.

Elw. Your interest and connections are, however, it seems, of merit enough to obtain something.

Sir A. Hardly—hardly, I protest—very trifling, I assure you—I really wish I could serve a gentleman as you are, with whom I have had an acquaintance of some standing.

Elw. Acquaintance!—I thought I heard you talk just now of the long establish'd friendship, the early and close intimacy that had subsisted between us.

Sir A. Early, close intimacy!—Did I say so?—No—Mr. Elwood—No—I believe you mistake.

Elw. Perhaps so—I thought you said something like those words; and I thought too that that intimacy had been of about twenty years standing—Since our very childhood, Sir Andrew.

8 *An HOUR before MARRIAGE.*

Sir A. Our acquaintance of twenty years standing!—I did not imagine it had been so long—your memory serves you better than mine does me.

Elw. I think I can perceive as much.

Sir A. Well, your servant, Mr. Elwood—I have a little business calls me away just now; but whenever you have a spare moment, and can give me a call, I shall be glad to see you—Your servant, Mr. Elwood. [Exit.]

Elw. I could laugh now, if my indignation were not predominant.—Vain, empty, heartless man!—But since he was not worth my friendship, I am glad I know him for what he really is.

Re-enter Stanley.

Stan. [*Aside*] So, there is but half an hour's work to complete the writings entirely—I beg your pardon, my good friend, for detaining you—Now, if you please, I'll tell you what this matter is, I want your advice upon.

Elw. Name the thing, and I'll give you honestly my opinion on it.

Stan. Honestly!—Ay, that's the point—Will you promise to tell me really what you think?—not to flatter me?

Elw. You may depend upon it.

Stan. For my part I think when one's opinion is asked, nothing can be more wrong and unfriendly than to mince matters, and not speak one's mind frankly on the subject.

Elw. I am quite of your opinion.

Stan. And no people in my mind are so ridiculous as those who expect to be dealt with in a polite circumspcct manner, and to have their friends fall in with all their idle foibles and prejudices.

Elw. Absurd to the last degree!

Stan.

Stan. And you promise me then, my dear friend, that you will not flatter me in the smallest degree?

Elw. I will not—But let me hear what this matter is.

Stan. You shall—but remember your promise—It is that I have thoughts of marrying!—Now, are you of opinion that I ought to take such a step?

Elw. Thoughts of marrying! You have thoughts of marrying?

Stan. Yes! is there any thing very extraordinary in that?

Elw. And you wish to have my opinion whether you ought to venture on a wife or not?

Stan. Just so.

Elw. Well,—first give me leave to ask you a question—How old are you?

Stan. How old am I?

Elw. Ay, what may be your age at present?

Stan. Age!—I am in very good health.

Elw. I don't dispute it—But pray answer my question.

Stan. What may be my age, say you?—I vow I don't rightly know.

Elw. What, man? not know your own age?

Stan. Not exactly—But what has that to do with the matter in question?

Elw. In my mind a great deal—How old were you when my father and you were first acquainted?

Stan. Your father!—Lord, what are you thinking of?—It's true, your father and I were friends and companions, but we were not of the same standing at all—He was a dozen years older than I.

Elw. No matter—Answer to what I ask you.

Stan. Why, about—about five and twenty—yes, just five and twenty.

10 *An HOUR before MARRIAGE,*

Elw. Oh, you remember that, it seems.—Well, some time after, you inherited a considerable estate.

Stan. From an old uncle—Yes, about eight years afterwards.

Elw. Then I think I recollect hearing my father say, you went out of the kingdom.

Stan. It's true.—I took a very agreeable tour, and stayed abroad, I think, six whole years.

Elw. Then you spent some time with my father in Wales.

Stan. And he some time with me in Oxfordshire—Between both somewhat more than five years.

Elw. And it can't be less since you return'd hither, and resided constantly in London, than—

Stan. Seventeen—Ay,—seventeen years last summer—But what—

Elw. Oh, is it so?—Five and twenty when you and my father came first acquainted—Eight years from that time till you came to your estate, thirty-three—Six years abroad, thirty-nine—Five between Wales and Oxfordshire, forty-four—and Seventeen since your return to London—the computation's not very difficult.—So, my good friend, it seems, that, by your own account, you are now full one and sixty.

Stan. One and sixty—it's impossible—it can't be.

Elw. Nay, I go by your own reckoning, and what can be fairer? Now I am not fond of giving advice; but since you press me so hard to do it, I will tell you fairly, that at your age I think you cannot do a more imprudent thing than marry—Wedlock may, I am convinced, prove a most happy state when enter'd upon early; but, if a person who has never thought of it before, comes to have the least idea of it at your time of life, he should put it out
of

of his head as fast as possible; for all the world is agreed that nothing is likely to make him half so wretched, nor half so ridiculous.

Stan. Well, Mr. Elwood, you have told me your mind, and now I'll tell you a piece of mine. This marriage is a thing that's not only resolv'd upon, but fix'd; fix'd, Mr. Elwood; I know I shan't make myself in the least ridiculous by it, and all you can say to dissuade me from it, won't signify a pin's point.

Elw. Oh! the thing is absolutely determin'd then?

Stan. It is—the writings are drawn; the wedding will be celebrated in a few days; I am fond of the girl, I have obtained the consent of her friends; my own word is past; and nothing can or shall prevent my carrying my design into execution.

Elw. Oh! is that the case?—Why, it's a different sort of an affair entirely from what I took it to be.

Stan. Entirely—I knew you would say so when you had rightly considered the matter—What!—to think of altering a fix'd intention!—No, no.—I am quite clear I am doing right;—Don't you think so?

Elw. Certainly.—You are doing perfectly right.

Stan. I protest I am heartily glad to hear you say so.—To be sure I am not quite so young as I was at five and twenty—But what then?—I am very hearty, more vigorous than half the flashy striplings of the time.

Elw. I don't doubt it—Why, you are but just in your strength, in your prime.

Stan. No more.

Elw. Besides, age, after all, is a matter of no consequence, in a marriage affair particularly.—

12 *An HOUR before MARRIAGE,*

If you are hale and well, you are young in effect, notwithstanding what any impertinent tell-tale parish registers may vouch to the contrary.

Stan. And you are of opinion, then, I cannot do better than marry?

Elw. Most certainly—Marry as quick as possible.—If it should be necessary to consider the point more maturely, you'll have full leisure enough to do that afterwards.

Stan. I thank you, my dear boy—I thank you. It's a great happiness to have a sincere friend to advise with in one's affairs.—I shall ask your advice often and often on what I do, depend upon it—And whenever it happens, will you promise to give me your thoughts in the same undisguised manner as you have done on this occasion?—I love that people should be free, plain, and open with me.

Elw. I see you do; nothing can be more evident.

Stan. I'll introduce you to the lady, that you may be present at the ceremony. Her mother and she lodge at a Mr. Wilkinson's in Pall Mall—Come there in half an hour—You need ask only for me, for I shall undoubtedly be there: I am impatient to see her; it's above twelve hours since I parted from her last.—Well, you'll come?

Elw. I shall.—In the mean time I'll make enquiry after my Fanny—Your servant.

[*Exit Elwood.*]

Stan. Be exact—This marriage scheme I am upon, promises fair to prove happy, for every body I mention it to, seems pleased, and smiles at it.—Let me see now how to manage the œconomy of the affair—I'll have every thing private, extremely private—When the ceremony in church is over, home we go snug to my house—No entertainment—No company to be invited.—Then, as to our manner of living, it shall be very quiet and retired, without cards, equipage,

equipage, or any of the long train of expensive follies that the fashionable world give in to—But who have we here?—Upon my life, my intended bride, Miss Melville—A gentleman with her!—Sir Andrew, her brother, I dare say :—he was expected in town last night.

Enter Sir Andrew, and Miss Melville.

Miss. Your servant, Mr. Stanley—My brother, Sir—Mr. Stanley, Sir Andrew. [*She introduces the gentlemen to each other—They salute.*]

Sir A. So, that Miss Melville is the person your choice has fallen upon, Eh!

Miss. This is the gentleman my mother was speaking to you about.

Sir A. That Lady Melville was speaking to me about—Ay; so I mean—Sir, I have the honour to kiss your hands—Lady Melville informs me that she designs you for this young lady's husband—Is the case so, Sir?

Stan. I am happy in having obtained such a promise, Sir.

Sir A. I understand such a negociation has been on foot—It's an affair in which I have not been consulted—My views for her, I confess, were different—Sir Donald M'Cloud, a gentleman of the best blood in the North—but it's no matter—Her mother, it seems, has made her election—She acquiesces;—they please themselves—and I am satisfied.

Stan. [*Aside.*] A very proud man this!—They must be of a great family.

Sir A. Well, Sir, the wedding is to be on a near day, I think—Where are we to have the fiddles, pray?—Where are we to dine and to dance?

Stan.

14 *An HOUR before MARRIAGE,*

Stan. Dine—dance—and fiddles—I—I know of no fiddles—I shall take the lady to—to my own house here in town.

Miss. Your house in town!—Well!—I obey—Your will must be a law—But the fiddles are essential; so I have had them bespoke, and most of the company is already invited—Not above twenty couple—You'll add as many of your own friends as you think proper:—perhaps all together may make thirty couple—You have a room large enough to hold thirty couple, I suppose, Mr. Stanley—if not, we can make two sets.

Stan. Fiddles engag'd!—thirty couple!—two sets!—hum!—

Sir A. Ay, at your own choice be it how to dispose of them.—My sister, Mr. ——— What's the gentleman's name?—I forget.

Miss. Stanley.

Sir A. Stanley,—Ay;—But what?—plain Stanley—without any addition?

Stan. Addition!—No, I have no additions—but I have that can purchase additions, if I coveted them.

Sir A. Purchase!—purchase ancestry!—purchase blood!—purchase a pure, regular, uninterrupted descent (such as this lady and I can boast of) from Robert Bruce, who wore the crown of Scotland, Sir?—I don't understand you—purchase indeed!

Miss. You are too warm, brother.

Stan. Sir, it's granted—it's all granted!—I make no sort of question of what you have advanced, and meant no offence, by what escap'd me, I assure you.

Sir A. Offence!—No—You could not mean offence. I accept your excuses—but Mister—What I was going to say was, that I take it for granted that you are acquainted with the smallness of my sister's fortune—not above a thousand pounds—

pounds—nothing in a manner—But at the same time you know her birth, and the stile in which she has been educated—You will maintain her in the same stile of course, Sir.

Miss. Oh! certainly brother!—But Mr. Stanley will not find it difficult to gratify me: I am exceedingly reasonable in my way of living, and moderate in my pleasures, exceedingly so.

Stan. Ay, Miss Melville; you have too much good sense to give into the idle fashionable absurdities—I dare say, now, that a retired quiet way of living is rather—

Miss. Oh! exactly what I would chuse—A post chaise and four for the country, and a chariot and pair for town, would be the height of my ambition—with no great number of servants—ten or a dozen only of each sex.—As to public places—a play once a week, a few ridottos, each new opera three or four times, a peep at Almack's and Soho, about half a dozen nights each in the season, and a mask'd ball—would quite content me.

Stan. Would quite content you? But, really—

Miss. Quite, upon my honour—Then, as to seeing a profusion of company, there is nothing I detest more—A rout once or twice a week, and a dozen friends to dinner or supper two or three of the remaining days, is all I should ever desire.

Sir A. Nothing can be more moderate.

Stan. Moderate!

Sir A. Moderate to a degree—Well, we are going in—Will you give us your company?

Stan. I shall follow you, Sir—I am not very well, and a turn or two will do me more good.

Miss. I have given him something to think of.

[*Ex. Miss and Sir Andrew.*]

Stan. Hum! let me consider a little what I am about here—Upon reflection, this appears but a very foolish piece of business—Let me see—To

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break it off entirely—But then the girl's handsome—very handsome—I should like the wife, though I object to the appendages—Better consult my friends, before I proceed any further.

Enter Elwood.

Elw. Well met again!—The person I wanted to see is from home—so here was I coming to wait the time of your appointment—I long to see this Dulcinea of your's—Come, bring me to her.

Stan. There's time enough, we need not be in a hurry.

Elw. Time enough!—You gave me so strict a charge to make no delay, that I thought——

Stan. Oh! it's a matter of little moment—it does not signify much if we shouldn't go at all.

Elw. Doesn't it?—I thought you seem'd eager to see her?

Stan. Why, yes—Eager?—yes, yes—W'ell go to be sure—I believe it's best.

Elw. Nay, as you please—But I had like to have forgot—I saw at a jeweller's, as I pass'd by, the charmingest pair of diamond ear-rings—They would be a most elegant present for your intended bride; and upon my word the man offer'd them very reasonable. He ask'd no more than——

Stan. It does not signify—It'l keep cool.

Elw. Keep cool!—why, you seem strangely indifferent about this matter, in comparison to what you were when I left you, just now.

Stan. Why, to tell you the truth, I have consider'd of it with a good deal more attention since—I think wedlock is a very precarious state.

Elw. You do.

Stan. I do, indeed—A state full of cares too, and of uneasinesses of every kind—House-keeping—children—servants—visitors—entertainments—the

—the fancies of a woman to humour—It's not the thing, Elwood.

Elw. And yet you said just now, that you were sure you were perfectly right in determining to marry, quite certain—quite clear in that point.

Stan. I am not so clear in it now—Nurses scolding, maids quarrelling, children squalling, a wife in fits, and one's whole house turn'd topsy turvy! It's enough to set one mad to think of it!—And all this might happen, Elwood.

Elw. Why all that you have been saying is within the circle of possibilities to be sure—but how came you not to consider the thing in this light before?

Stan. I don't know—I was bewitch'd—and I am bewitch'd still I think; for I like the girl extremely well—But all these apprehensions so stagger me—For Heaven's sake advise me what to do.

Elw. I thank you: I am cur'd of giving advice—But you need be at no loss—For one who gives you advice when you chuse to require it, there are twenty who will most kindly bestow it on you, without ever being asked—Your servant—I'll go and pursue my enquiry—When I see you next, I hope to find you resolved one way or other.

[*Exit.*]

Stan. I hope so too—At present I am, at a cruel loss indeed—Let me see! How was it? House in town, house in the country! a set of horses! a regiment of servants!—I shall be eat up, devoured! Then every public place—plays, operas, Cornely's, Almack's, Pantheon, ridottos, and mask'd balls! A crown at one place, half a guinea at a second, and a large subscription at a third!—Then clothes to appear in, dinners, suppers, routs! I shan't know my own house again: every time I enter my doors I shall fancy myself in a tavern or at an
D assembly.

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assembly. Oh! I have given myself a cursed deal to think of: and the more I think the more I am puzzled, whether it would be right for me to marry, or to let it alone. *[Exit.]*



A C T II.

SCENE, a Room in Lady Melville's Lodgings.

Enter Stanley and a Servant.

Stanley.

LADY Melville not up yet, say you?—and neither Sir Andrew nor Miss Melville at home?

Serv. No, Sir, they both went out just after breakfast. My master was call'd away about business, and my young lady is gone a shopping—but one or the other will be back soon, Sir. *[Exit.]*

Stan. Gone a shopping!—Ay, that's another blessed circumstance—What with mercers, milliners, perfumers, lacemen, jewellers, toymen, and the rest of the frivolous fraternity, a man may be ruined before he has time to turn himself about—Who is this coming up stairs?—Sir Andrew!—No—It's old Tardy the lawyer, I protest—He has slipp'd the time when my mind was hot upon't, and now, I suppose, brings the writings, when I have nearly reason'd myself out of all thoughts of the thing.

Enter Tardy.

Tar. Your most obedient, Mr. Stanley—Well! you have hurried and hurried me out of my life—now I hope you'll be satisfied—Here are the writings you were so impatient for—Let us run them over together, to see if there have been no errors committed in the drawing of them up.

Stan. We may do that at any time, Mr. Tardy—There is no occasion to be in the least hurry about it.

Tar. Ah, now you speak like a man of judgment, Mr. Stanley—It is a maxim with me, never to be in a hurry about any thing.

Stan. A wise resolution. [*Aside.*]—Why, as I am still in some sort of suspense, I think I can't do better, (since this old fellow is here) than to consult him upon my affair: he doesn't want sense, and has a good deal of experience—I'll do it—He'll clear up all my doubts.

Tar. Well, I'll leave the writings with you, and bid you good-morning, Mr. Stanley.

Stan. Stay one moment, good Mr. Tardy—I have a little affair to mention to you.

Tar. With all my heart, Sir; mention it.

Stan. As you have drawn up these writings, Mr. Tardy, you cannot but know how matters stand between the young lady of this house and me.

Tar. You mean the young lady whose mother rents these lodgings, namely, Miss Melville.

Stan. Certainly I do,—Who else should I mean?

Tar. Nay, I know not—I can only give a sort of a guess as to what you hint at.

Stan. Indeed!—Well, I'll tell you then—I have obtained the consent of her friends (which of

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course includes hers) and have given them my promise to marry her—So far all is in a train.

Tar. It's very possible.

Stan. Very possible! I tell you it is as I say.

Tar. I know nothing to the contrary.

Stan. How should you, when the thing is a fact? Now, she is young, handsome, and very virtuously brought up, Mr. Tardy.

Tar. It's not unlikely.

Stan. What do you mean by not unlikely?—I say, she is young, handsome, and virtuously brought up: now this last circumstance made me think I should have a chance of living quietly and retired with her.

Tar. You might think so.

Stan. I *did* think so—But I have since found her to be giddy and extravagant; so I am convinced that, on the contrary, she would lead me into a good deal of expence.

Tar. It's not impossible but you may suppose so.

Stan. I tell you, I am convinced of it—I am as certain of it as that I am standing here—I suppose I may be clear in that—You see me standing here, don't you?

Tar. I think so.

Stan. You only think so?

Tar. No more—Isn't every thing a matter of doubt?—and in law hardly any thing is certain—Oh, the glorious uncertainty of the law! Such things I could tell you, such alibis made out, and such proofs overthrown!—There was a case, (you'll find it in *Strange's Reports*, volume iii, folio 517,) *Wilkins against Sanderson*; it was in the second of *William and Mary*—*Wilkins*—

Stan. We'll hear it another time; at present, Mr. Tardy—

Tar.

Tar. Nay, I ask pardon—I should not have quoted the case but in evidence of what I advanced—That there was nothing in law which would not admit of being controverted—For instance now—you are in possession of a very good estate in Oxfordshire.

Stan. I am, and have been these twenty years.

Tar. Well, and you think, perhaps, that that estate's your own?

Stan. Yes, I am pretty positive of it.

Tar. And now, I am not—I don't know but that estate may belong to me.

Stan. To you, Mr. Tardy?

Tar. Yes, to me—Were I to put you upon producing your titles, and proving your right, there is a possibility that it might appear to belong to me.

Stan. The man's mad—Well, I'll not enter into any dispute with you. The matter I wish to have your opinion on is this—You know that in law and in strictness I am still at liberty to proceed further or not, as I chuse.

Tar. Perhaps you may—perhaps you may not.

Stan. What the devil!—I am not married yet—am I?

Tar. It's more than I know.

Stan. But I know to my comfort, that I am not.

Tar. It may be as you say.

Stan. You'd set one mad—Why you know it is—Are not those writings yet unsigned?

Tar. They may—they may not—I admit nothing.

Stan. Bless me—Well, I'll say nothing—that I have still a choice, I know very well, so I don't ask you about that: but I would be glad to have
your

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your advice whether it would be prudent in me to marry or not.

Tar. Whether it would be prudent in you to marry or not?

Stan. Yes, that's the question.

Tar. There's much to be said on both sides.

Stan. That I know—But what is your opinion?—Do you think it an advisable step, or do you not?

Tar. The event will probably make that appear.

Stan. What would you advise?

Tar. It is a matter of a very doubtful nature.

Stan. True—But what resolution would you have me take?—I must determine myself one way or other.

Tar. I do think you must.

Stan. (*Eagerly*) Must do what?

Tar. Determine yourself one way or another.

Stan. I believe you are jesting—What is it you mean?—I ask you whether you think I shall do right to marry this young lady?

Tar. That's according as it happens.

Stan. Would I do better to think you, to break the thing off?

Tar. According as it happens.

Stan. For Heaven's sake give me a rational answer. I have a great inclination for the girl.

Tar. That may be.

Stan. But I'm afraid, that if I married her, I might repent it afterwards.

Tar. The thing is not impossible.

Stan. in one word, what would you have me do?

Tar. Just what you please.

Stan. Now what would you do, if you were in my place?

Tar,

Tar. As it is not a point of law, nor such a thing as one can lay before counsel, I really don't know. And so, Sir, I am your very humble servant. *[Exit.]*

Stan. A scoundrel! Not one word that's positive to be got out of him!—after spending one's breath for half an hour together endeavouring to squeeze some sort of an opinion out of him, one is just as wise as at first.—Well, I must e'en be content to debate the matter with myself—What is to be done?—Passion cries out, go on;—Wisdom says, break off—Which shall I listen to?—In doing the thing there is great pleasure and great risque—in letting it alone there is much safety but no small disappointment.—Disappointment?—Well! what then? Will that disappointment be a lasting misfortune?—No, no, no—I'll stick to the safest side.—A mad dog one may shoot, a cat one may drown, but of all domestic animals, a wife is the most troublesome, and the hardest to get rid of.

Enter Elwood.

Elw. Ay, I guess'd I shou'd find you here—Well!—What have you determined upon?

Stan. I am fully resolv'd against the thing.

Elw. Seriously and positively?

Stan. Seriously and positively.

Elw. Well, I protest it gives me a great deal of pleasure to hear you say so.

Stan. I see plainly I should have been the most miserable man in the world.

Elw. Indeed there was a thousand to one you would.

Stan. It cou'dn't fail—I am happy now I have taken my determination—But tell me what you have heard with respect to your affair.

Elw.

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Elw. I come this instant from a lady who is intimate with my Fanny, and who tells me she is in town, but won't disclose any more for the present. She has engaged, however, to deliver her a letter from me.

Stan. Well, do you marry, if you are so disposed—For my part, I shall never entertain so much as a thought of it—Crouching to all the whimsies of a creature who hasn't conceptions above dressing a doll, and yet would fain govern a man.

Elw. You seem to be out of humour with the wedded state indeed.

Stan. Dragg'd about under her arm from one public place to another, as if for a show, and kept always within the length of her apron-string, to serve for a triumph over every other woman of her acquaintance, who has not yet had the good fortune to pick up somebody to make a fool of.

Elw. You declaim like a pleader with a double fee. You might write a satire now that would have bitterness and ill-nature enough in it to run through a dozen editions.

Stan. I say nothing but what's true—Is it not astonishing, Elwood, that a man of common sense and reason, one who isn't quite an idiot, should ever think of marrying?

Elw. When they do, they certainly consider the matter in another light.

Stan. It's preposterous and absurd, considered in any light—If ever I am so abandoned of grace as to marry, may all the plagues that have ever fallen on husbands, from the beginning of time, be accumulated, and light with double weight upon me!

Elw. So, so—vent your spleen—'twill ease you.—I'll run and see if my friend has delivered my letter yet, or whether she can give me any further intelligence—Are you staying here?

Stan.

Stan. Just waiting for the return of the lady, or of her brother, to disengage my promise—When you have made your enquiry, you'll find me in the park; or, if you are a very short time, it is possible I may still be here.

Elw. Au revoir then.

[*Exit.*

Stan. Marry!—No—I have got a little more wisdom—my eyes are open'd.—What silly things men will do when they are under the dominion of passion!—Here's my poor friend, Elwood, now, just going to plunge himself voluntarily into the female net—won't take advice—A sad thing to be obstinate—It will not be long before he repents having done what he is now so eager to compass—But here comes my young lady very opportunely—Now for a few civil lies, and the business is dispatched.

Enter Miss Melville.

Stan. Miss Melville, your servant—I am come on an awkward errand to you.

Miss. You only banter—What may be this errand, Sir?

Stan. Miss Melville, we men are strange creatures—We talk for ever of the fickleness of your sex; and, if the truth were own'd, we are to the full as variable and inconstant.

Miss. You pay our sex a compliment, Mr. Stanley, but I am afraid not a sincere one—Is there no satire implied, Sir?

Stan. Not at all, Miss Melville—I mean precisely what I say, I assure you—We are the most capricious animals;—change our minds twenty times in a day.

Miss. Why, really, I don't think we do it much oftener.

Stan. An infirmity in our nature, which we are to be pitied for, Miss Melville—Sometimes indeed,

E

it's

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it's no matter of choice;—sometimes untoward circumstances—put it out of our power to do—what would contribute most to our happiness.

Miss. [*Aside.*] Pray Heaven, I may guess right!—So much for preface, Mr. Stanley—Now to the subject, if you please.

Stan. I had flatter'd myself, madam—with—the hopes of—enjoying the—highest felicity—by possessing your hand—but——

Miss. [*Aside.*] Fortunate beyond my hopes!—Proceed, Sir.

Stan. By possessing the hand of—so very accomplished a lady;—but—certain occurrences—certain unexpected and unhappy occurrences, madam,—have since fallen out, madam, which—which—though they run counter to my most favourite wishes—to my most favourite wishes, madam—yet must——

Miss. In English, you have changed your mind since we met half an hour ago in the park.

Stan. Madam, I—intreat you will not do me the injustice to imagine so—I—assure you, by all that is dear to me, that nothing but—the most invincible and most cruel necessity——

Miss. I understand you sufficiently, Sir—it is needless to enlarge upon the point—suffice it, that you could not do me a greater pleasure than by thus declining, what, if you had not, I should myself have broke off.—And, so, Sir, I wish you a good morning. [*Exit.*]

Stan. Eh! How?—What, if I had not, she would herself have broke off!—Rhodomontade!—Rhodomontade!—She's piqued—piqu'd to the soul—I see it—But women are wond'rous quick at turning off these sort of disappointments as if the refusal came from themselves—I am glad though, she takes it in this high manner;—her pride will prevent the affair's having any disagreeable consequences—

quences—A good riddance!—a good riddance!—
But what do I stay here for?—It's by no means
necessary I should meet Sir Andrew; there's
no manner of occasion for an interview with—
Curse upon't, here he is—Unlucky!—plaguy un-
lucky!—But I must make the best of it.

Enter Sir Andrew Melville.

Sir A. Mr. Stanley, your most obedient—I am
much pleas'd at finding you here—It is the mark
of impatience that is flattering to my sister.

Stan. [*Aside.*] Unfortunate!—Sir Andrew—I—
I—

Sir A. Indeed, to do the girl justice, your impa-
tience to conclude matters is but natural—She is a
young lady of—

Stan. Of infinite merit, most certainly—But, my
dear Sir—

Sir A. I guess what you would say—You would
tell me that the lawyer has put the finishing hand
to the writings—I know it—I see them there.

Stan. I beg your pardon, Sir, it's another thing.

Sir A. Say no more, I am before-hand with you
there too. You want, since every thing is in readi-
ness, to have a nearer day fix'd for the ceremony.

Stan. [*Aside.*] Very cruel this—Dear Sir, if you
will indulge me but while I speak two or three
words—

Sir A. Twenty! twenty.

Stan. Lady Melville, your mother, and yourself,
Sir Andrew, have both done me great honour in
accepting of my proposals for your sister.

Sir A. Pass that, Mr. Stanley; your happiness,
you said, depended upon it, and we wou'dn't cross
you—You have your heart's content now, and
I give you much joy of it.

Stan. You know, Sir, I—am not a—very
young man, and—I fear Miss Melville may—

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not think that circumstance—altogether a—pleasing one; so——

Sir A. Pardon me, Sir, from the first your age was no objection—It is written to be sure in very legible characters in your face; but for that very reason, as it never was any secret to my sister, so it can be no cause of complaint now.

Stan. I have a peevishness—an—an oddity in my temper, that I fear would be—insupportable to a wife. It might—create an aversion in her, which——

Sir A. Not at all. She has too much complaisance, and too strict notions of propriety to——

Stan. Then, Sir, my health—I find it but so, so. I am greatly apprehensive, her affection may cool when she sees her time taken up in nurse-tending a sickly man.

Sir A. Oh, her sense of duty will turn all such pain into pleasure.

Stan. Will nothing, nothing do? [*Aside*]——Well, Sir, shall I speak sincerely to you?—I would not have you bestow your sister on me.

Sir A. Do you jest, Sir?—You don't know Sir Andrew Melville, Sir; when once my word is past, I had rather die than not stand to it.

Stan. But, my dear Sir, I wave it—I wave it freely—I release you from all obligation of that sort.

Sir A. Sir, I am bound by my honour—my sacred honour. Her mother has consented to your offer, I have pass'd my word also; and I confirm my promise that you shall marry my sister, in spite of any who may claim pretensions to her hand—Were there a score of suitors, and each one of the number a duke, still you should have her—Give me your hand, Mr. Stanley—I am a man of my word, I say you shall have her.

Stan

Stan. This man sticks like bird-lime. [*Aside*—Sir, I am sorry you force me to it; but since I cannot make you understand me otherwise, I must tell you in so many words that I have chang'd my mind, and am now determined not to marry.

Sir A. You have chang'd your mind, and are now determined not to marry?

Stan. Just so—Something has happen'd, which puts it out of my power to alter my condition at present. I hope you are not offended, Sir, at this change in my sentiments?

Sir A. Offended!—by no means, Sir—you are perfectly free to act as you please; I should be loth to put the least constraint on you. [*Exit.*

Stan. Hum!—very reasonable indeed! an exceeding mild, civil, considerate gentleman—I protest I did not think I should get so easily out of this dilemma—I am a fortunate man—What an escape have I had!—Well, now I have got out of this danger, if ever I think again of wedlock, may the ceremony be my requiem, and the marriage-bed my grave!

Re-enter Sir Andrew Melville.

Eh! what's the meaning of this? return'd! He has not chang'd his mind, I hope—I must speak him as fair as I can—Sir Andrew, I assure you, I am most sincerely sorry to have been under a necessity of declining the very high honour I had propos'd to myself.

Sir A. Oh, Sir, there's no harm, no harm in the world.

Stan. It gives me vast concern, upon my honour.

Sir A. You need make no apology, Sir;—you have a right to act just as you please.

Stan. I am happy to find, Sir, that you see the

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the thing in so rational a light—and I wish you a very good morning, Sir. (*Offering to go.*)

Sir A. One moment, good Sir—Will you give yourself the trouble to chuse one of these two swords. (*Offering two swords to Stanley.*)

Stan. I to chuse one of those two swords?

Sir A. Yes, Sir—Pray be so kind as to see which you like best—Take whichever you please, Sir.

Stan. (*Retreating toward the door.*) Sir, I—I—don't understand what you mean—I—I wish you a good morning. (*Offers to go.*)

Sir A. (*Keeping between Stanley and the door.*) Sir, I beg ten thousand pardons, I see you are going to the door to bolt it, that we mayn't be broke in upon—I'll save you the trouble, Sir. (*Bolts and stands before the door.*) Now, Sir—(*Offers Stanley the swords.*)

Stan. Sir, what is it you mean?

Sir A. My dear Sir, no more than this—It is your pleasure to refuse my sister's hand, after you have asked it, and it's having been promis'd to you.—Now, upon the strength of that refusal, Sir, I must beg of you to do me the favour to permit me to have the felicity of cutting a throat with you.

Stan. Sir, I—I—desire no such felicity—I—have no throat to cut.

Sir A. There are people, Sir, who would make a noise about such a matter as this, and affront you—But it's not my way;—I love peace and quietness.

Stan. Peace and quietness!—

Sir A. I do, Sir—you see it—I beg you will give yourself the trouble to chuse whichever hits your fancy most.

Stan. Sir, I don't fancy either—I desire to be excused.

Sir A.

Sir A. Come, come, Mr. Stanley—Do what you ought to do; don't suffer yourself to be press'd any longer. Act as becomes a man of honour—Come, chuse—please yourself. (*Offering the swords.*)

Stan. I have no inclination to please myself in that way, Sir.

Sir A. Excuse me, Sir—It's possible I may misunderstand you. Perhaps you have alter'd your mind, and mean to accept the honour of my sister's hand.

Stan. You mistake, Sir, I do not—I—I—wish you a good morning. (*Endeavouring to get round to the door.*)

Sir A. Oh, I ask your pardon—You chuse this method of deciding the matter—Here then, Sir—(*Offers Stanley the swords again.*)

Stan. Hold, Sir!—hold!—I do resolve;—I do resolve—I'll marry the lady, Sir—I'll marry the lady.

Sir A. I am extremely happy to find, Sir, that at length you consider the matter in so rational a light—I love peace and quietness; and besides, I protest to you, Mr. Stanley, I have so much esteem for you, that it would have given me great pain to have been under the necessity of killing you.

Stan. Sir—you—you are vastly kind;—and—I—am very much obliged to you.

Sir A. Oh fye, Sir,—no obligation at all—Well then, I'll step in to my mother and sister, and let them know that you are come to put the finishing hand to this affair. [*Exit.*]

Stan. So I am to be married at last!—Eh? after the resolution, the solemn fix'd resolution I had taken, and the strong reasons I had for embracing that resolution!—I'll not think—I'll not think about it—What must be, must be.

Enter

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Enter Elwood.

Elw. Here still!—let me tell you how I have sped—My letter has been deliver'd, my dear friend;—my letter has been deliver'd; and my sweet kind good genius, who took the charge of it, tells me, I may expect an answer in a few hours—in a few hours, Stanley—What!—you stand motionless like a statue, and seem not to hear me.

Stan. I do hear you.

Elw. Well, and why don't you take part in my happiness? Why don't you wish me joy?

Stan. I do wish you joy.

Elw. Oh, I ask pardon—I recollect now that you have forsworn marriage, and so I suppose you hate the very mention of any thing that tends that way.

Stan. I don't like it much indeed—but——

Elw. Well, you have disengaged your promise, and are now your own man again—But though you have quarrelled with matrimony yourself, I hope if I bring this affair to bear, you'll not refuse to be present at my wedding.

Stan. I am afraid you will be at mine first.

Elw. Afraid I'll be at yours first!—what do you mean?

Stan. I *hope* you will, I mean—I—I—I—have chang'd my mind, Elwood.

Elw. You are not serious?

Stan. Too serious—*Quite* serious, I mean—*Quite* serious, depend upon it.

Elw. And after seeming so fully resolv'd against it, you are now determined to marry?

Stan. Why—yes—There is a fate in it, I think—I shall be married I suppose before night; and
may

may I perish, if a quarter of an hour ago it was not the furthest thing in the world from my intention.

Elw. And whence comes so very sudden a change in your determination?—No constraint—no compulsion, sure!

Stan. Compulsion!—What do you mean?—my own free choice certainly.—Look ye, Sir, every gentleman is free to act as is most agreeable to him; but the whole matter is, that you must marry my sister, or be so kind as to—

Elw. What is it you mean?—I don't understand you. You are ruffled, I see—Will you try to compose yourself, and let me ask you what it is that can induce you to change your mind so suddenly?

Stan. Ask me no questions, dear Elwood—I am a miserable man!—a—a—I mean I—am exceedingly happy—exceedingly happy—never happier in my life—That's all, my dear Elwood—that's all—And so, good morrow to you. (*Leading Elwood toward the door.*)

Elw. You are not yourself—Something is the matter with you I see plainly—I'll not leave you—I shall not ask you to tell me any thing, but I'll stay with you till you recover yourself, and can talk reasonably; and then, if I find you have been in the least ill used, by all that's fair and honest, I'll see reparation made to you.

Stan. Hark!—I hear somebody coming—Do, pray, step down the back stairs—I beg of you do—(*Endeavouring to lead Elwood out.*)

Elw. I tell you I'll not leave you—I do not know who these people are that you are got amongst, and I'll not leave you, let who will come.

Stan. Well, step into the next room then—Out of sight, for Heaven's sake.

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Elw. With all my heart—So I am at hand in case you want my assistance, I care not for the rest.

Stan. There!—get you in—get you in—[*Puts Elwood out.*] I am glad I have lodg'd him out of sight—If this fighting baronet had found him here, I don't know what might have been the consequence. The anxieties of friendship are a sufficient tax upon it; we should spare it the dangers which it would generously rush upon.

Re-enter Sir Andrew with Miss Melville.

Miss. I protest I can hardly give credit to it.

Sir A. My dear, I tell you it is as I say: Mr. Stanley is eager to put the last hand to this affair, and is come now purposely to expedite and put it out of all doubt or suspense.

Miss. I understood quite the reverse from Mr. Stanley himself.

Elw. [*Listening*] That voice!—My Fanny!—Sir Andrew! What is all this?

Miss. Speak, Mr. Stanley—did not you tell me that certain occurrences had fallen out, which put invincible obstacles in the way of our union?

Stan. I did.

Sir A. Answer me, Mr. Stanley, did not you tell me this moment that you were desirous of marrying this lady?

Stan. I did.

Miss. Did not you formally and positively disengage your word to me?

Stan. I did.

Sir A. Did not you in express words tell me that you were ready, and wish'd to conclude matters?

Stan. I did.

Miss.

Miss. And pray what am I to understand by this, Sir?

Sir A. And pray what am I to understand by it? Look ye, Sir——

Stan. Sir, I say as I said before—I'll marry the lady.

Sir A. [*To Miss.*] You see—You aspire to the honour of an union with this lady, Sir?

Stan. I do, Sir.

Sir A. Well, Sir, your desires shall be complied with; my sister is so partial to you, that I can answer for her.

Elw. [*Aside.*] Heavens! She won't sure.

Miss. Don't answer for your sister, Sir Andrew—You might happen to be mistaken.

Sir A. How! what is it you would be at?

Miss. This—Lady Melville, has all along been so eager for this match, because of its being advantageous in a pecuniary view; and (though you seem'd to slight it) you were likewise so strenuous for it on the same account, that I was quite borne down between you, and could not point-blank oppose the design, though, from the first, I was secretly and positively determined against it.

Sir A. Eh! this is new matter.

Stan. Very consolatory for me though. [*Aside.*]

Miss. Determined never to marry Mr. Stanley, I did all in my power to make a refusal, if possible, come from his side; and even within this hour thought I had alarm'd his fears so strongly for the expence I should bring on him, that he would undoubtedly break the matter off.

Stan. And was it all mere design?

Miss. Merely.

Stan. New matter indeed!—I fear I have been too hasty. [*Aside.*]

Sir A. But what view, what meaning could you have?

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have? To what end slight this eligible proposal?
and such a number of other excellent offers?

Miss. To keep my hand for the only man who
ever touch'd, or ever merited my heart—Mr. El-
wood.

Elw. [*Aside.*] Generous creature!

Stan. Elwood!—Elwood!—New matter still.

Sir A. Elwood!—A beggar!

Miss. Elwood your companion, your old school-
fellow, your friend, brother!

Sir A. Child, you're mad—He's return'd home
without a shilling.

Miss. I know it—Here's a letter was given me
just now, wherein he informs me so himself.

Stan. [*Aside.*] Elwood a beggar!—I recollect
now—Read the letter—read it, ma'am—this
opens.

Elw. [*Aside.*] Now for it.

Miss. [*Reads.*] “This will inform you that I
“am return'd safe;—but Fortune has frown'd on
“me—If your sentiments are in the least altered,
“answer me not:—I shall in that case go back a
“voluntary exile, but never blame or upbraid
“you—If your affection is still unimpaired, a
“warm heart still beats in my breast on which no
“time or distance shall ever make any impression.”
And am I to blame to love him? or should I not
rather be the vilest of creatures, if, destitute as he
is, I did not resolve to share an equal fate with
him, and strive to repair (if possible) the dis-
appointments he has sustained from adverse For-
tune?

Elw. [*Coming up from behind.*] Thou dear, dear
creature!—all that's good and excellent in woman!
—how shall I—how can I thank you?

Miss. Elwood here!—This is wrong, my dear
Elwood!—you'll overpower my weak spirits—
this

this excess of joy!—I shall never be able to support it.

Elw. You will—you will, my love—Come!—a little resolution—There!—there!—[*Supporting her.*]

Stan. This is charming!—This is delightful!

Sir A. Your pardon—It's very ridiculous; Mr. Stanley—This young man is not worth a shilling, and what will her little pittance of a thousand pounds—

Elw. No, Sir Andrew, a brighter prospect is before us—To put your friendship to the test, and give my dear Fanny an opportunity of displaying the noble disinterestedness of her affection, I deceived you both with a false account of my success—She has justified my confidence; what effect it has had on you, knock at your breast, Sir Andrew, and something within will inform you.

Sir A. How?—a false account!

Miss. And could you doubt me, Elwood?

Elw. Never an instant—But I foresaw the pleasure I should purchase by this little deceit, and that with respect to you was my motive—not any suspicion of your truth and constancy—I have brought home between twenty and thirty thousand pounds, on which we may (I think) venture together with the sanction even of Prudence itself.

Sir A. Whimsical, as I live!—But—a—a—what the devil, Elwood!—do you expect that—that—that people should guess these things?—I—I—cou'dn't conjure—No mortal can have a greater regard for you than I have—no mortal—Command me in any thing you will—any thing you will, Elwood—But—a—a—hadn't we best go in, sister, and—and—acquaint your mother, Lady Melville, with these matters?

Miss. }
Elw. } Undoubtedly.

Stan.

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Stan. All this new matter will be a surprise upon her; for she looked on my affair as concluded—So did I indeed in a manner myself. Though I should like so excellent a creature should fall to my own lot, yet methinks I am still more delighted at my friend's happiness in obtaining her—Well! I wish you joy—I wish you both much joy; and at the same time that you receive my congratulations, accept my thanks, Elwood! for I am now convinced that a match between the ages of sixty and twenty-four is the parent of elopement and divorce; and that in such cases, the ecclesiastical ceremonies begun in the church will probably be concluded in Doctor's Commons.

F I N I S.

